

Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders

www.childrensnational.org/CASD



Children's National: CASD CHAT

Introduction

Welcome from all of us at CASD!

Spring is in the air! In this issue, you will learn about CASD's Preschool Social Skills Group, tips on preparing for your child's next IEP meeting, and upcoming events in the local autism community.

CASD Clinical Showcase

CASD Preschool Social Skills Group

The Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (CASD) offers both research and clinical services to families of children with autism and other related disorders around the greater DC Metropolitan area. As an e-newsletter, CASD Chat frequently spreads the word about new research opportunities and publications. This month, we would like to shine the spotlight on two of our extraordinarily talented clinicians and their group therapy work.



CASD's Preschool Social Skills Group works on building social communication skills in children ages 3 to 5, who have minimal difficulties with core language skills. It is run by Abby Brandt, MA, CCC-SLP (Speech/Language Pathologist) and Allison Ratto, PhD (Clinical Psychologist). Over the course of the group, children will learn about emotions, coping skills, understanding others' thoughts, flexibility, and cooperative pretend play skills. The group also helps children with sharing, taking turns, participating in group activities, following instructions, and waiting. Parents participate actively in the group by working with their children, as well as through parent sessions. Parent sessions teach parents how to reinforce the skills taught in group, better manage their children's challenging behaviors, use good self-care skills, and foster neurodiversity to celebrate their child's differences.



Dr. Ratto (left) and Ms. Brandt are accepting children for a new cycle of this group that is starting at the end of March! If you are interested in learning more, please contact autism@childrensnational.org with the **SUBJECT LINE: "CASD Playgroup"**.

CASD Cares

Spring into Action

It's that time of year again! Just when you started to feel settled into the school year and think you have a moment to breathe, you look at the calendar and realize it's time to prep for another Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP) meeting! Here are a few tips to get you through your child's next IEP meeting.

1. Get organized: Do you have a master file of all of your child's records? Medical and educational? If not, it's time to spring into action and get that cumulative file together. If you don't know where to start, check out this Wrightslaw article, <http://wrightslaw.com/info/organize.file.htm>, which provides steps on how best to organize your child's files from the very beginning. If you do not have all your child's files, you have a right to request them. Please note that there may be a copying fee, but well worth the investment. It's a journey, and the more organized you are as a parent, the easier this part of the process will be down the road. If your child requires support services as they get older, you will need to produce your child's records.

2. Parents, important IEP Team Members: According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, Section 1414(d)(1)(B), the IEP team includes: (i) the parents of a child with a disability. Do you have ideas about your child's IEP goals? Setup a time to speak with your child's teacher and service providers prior to the IEP meeting to develop goals together. Remember, you know your child best. You may not have a PhD in psychology or be a special education teacher, but you are your child's constant. As the years go by, you will always be there when teachers, therapists and doctors come and go. Taking the time now to be engaged and an active part of your child's education will make the journey a lot easier as the years go by.

3. Advocating without showing emotion: IEP meetings are challenging for parents, and can be very emotional. Every year, the team comes together to discuss your child's future and this process can be very stressful. You need to harness these emotions, learn to advocate for your child in a professional manner, remain calm, and not be combative. This can be easier said than done, but keep in mind that you want your child's teacher and service providers to see things from your perspective. Shouting and getting upset will only make matters worse, and everyone will stop listening. Staying positive, being organized and being prepared will help your child in the long run. Have a great meeting!

CASD in the Media

On Tuesday, February 7th, PBS NEWSHOUR featured a report by special correspondent John Donovan and producer Caren Zucker, and included an interview with CASD's Associate Director and Psychologist, Laura Anthony. You can view the piece by clicking below!



PBS NEWSHOUR

You May Be Interested...

The Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) created the "Affordable Care Act (ACA) Toolkit for Self-Advocates." The toolkit explains in plain language all the different pieces of the ACA, what the proposed changes are, what the impact of repealing it would be, and how you can get involved. To learn more, please visit: <http://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/aca/>

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